DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 341 027 CS 010 802

AUTHOR Ford, Michael P.
TITLE What Do You Mean I Have To Be a Writer? I Teach Reading: A Comparative Study of the Writing of Reading Teachers and the Writing Activities of Undergraduate Reading Methods Students.
PUB DATE Nov 91
NOTE 7p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the College Reading Association (35th, Crystal City, VA, October 31-November 3, 1991).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Tests/Evaluation Instruments (160)

EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS Comparative Analysis; Higher Education; Occupational Surveys; *Preservice Teacher Education; *Reading Teachers; Undergraduate Students; *Writing Attitudes
IDENTIFIERS *Writing Tasks

ABSTRACT

To develop courses which would emphasize instruction in writing specifically needed to successfully carry out the professional responsibilities of a reading teacher, a study surveyed inservice reading teachers about their writing activities and compared those results with the writing activities required of preservice reading teachers in existing courses. Recent past graduates of a graduate program in reading education were surveyed regarding the nature and frequency of their writing activities, and their views on writing experiences critical to their job. Undergraduate students who had completed at least one course in reading education were surveyed concerning their writing experiences in reading education and in teacher education in general. Results indicated that there was common ground between the writing activities of the two groups, with six activities in common: unit/lesson plans, instructional writing, brainstorming, curriculum development, progress reports, and short responses. As the research was carried out, a more important issue surfaced: how did these reading teachers see themselves as writers? The researcher became less concerned with providing students with a typical set of writing activities for reading teachers than with assisting students to see themselves as insiders in a community of writers. (Two appendixes contain an explanation of five ways to foster writers in reading education courses, and the survey instrument.) (SR)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED341027

What Do You Mean I Have to Be a Writer? I Teach Reading: A Comparative Study of the Writing of Reading Teachers and the Writing Activities of Undergraduate Reading Methods Students

Presented by Michael P. Ford, Reading Education Department of the University of Wisconsin OShkosh (N/E 414 COEHS UWO Oshkosh, WI 54901)

OVERVIEW: Most experts suggest that good reading teachers need to be readers, but do good reading teachers need to be writers? As the lines between reading and writing instruction become blurred and efforts to integrate the language arts continue; it would seem to follow that reading teachers not only need to be readers, but also need to writers.

How comfortable are teachers with themselves as writers? If I was given a chance to retitle this presentation, I might retitle it "Do I Have to be an Astronaut to Teach about Space?" It was the response provided by a less-than-receptive graduate student when I suggested that a good reading teacher probably needed to be a writer. The comment is just one example of why I have a growing concern about how reading teachers perceive themselves as writers. It is that growing concern which has become the heart of this study.

ORIGINAL INTENT: In the mid-1980's, my university was engaged in an extensive goal setting process and identified concerns about a perceived decline in the basic literacy skills of university students. A subcommittee of university faculty were appointed to look specifically at the decline as it related to writing abilities and habits of our students. Once they acknowledged that decline, the subcommittee began to explore potential solutions for addressing concerns in this area. One solution was to examine the successful implementation of "writing emphasis" courses at a nearby system campus.

I participated in a faculty college focused on the discussion of "writing emphasis" courses on our campus. Such courses would be offered by each college. These course would have limited enrollments so that instructors could place a greater emphasis on writing activities. This emphasis on writing would also include the teaching of writing formats and styles unique to the future professional contexts of students in those colleges. The potential of developing such courses in my department -- courses which would emphasize instruction in writing specifically needed to successfully carry out the professional responsibilities of being a reading teacher -- caused me to begin to think about the writing activities of reading teachers. I proposed a study which would survey inservice reading teachers about their writing activities and compare those results with the writing activities required of preservice reading teachers in existing courses. Such information might allow my department to more effectively integrated discipline-specific writing activities in our undergraduate reading courses to better prepare our students for the types of writing they would have to do to be successful in their future professional contexts.

CS010802

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL IN OTHER THAN PAPER COPY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Michael P. Ford

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☒ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PROCEDURE: Recent past graduates of our MSE degree program in Reading Education were surveyed regarding the nature of their writing activities. A survey was designed identifying a wide variety of writing activities. (See attached survey.) Respondents were asked to indicate the frequency with which they engaged in that type of writing activity to successfully carry out the responsibilities of their positions as reading teachers. Respondents were also asked to generally describe the writing experiences which they believed were critical for successful completion of their job responsibilities. Frequency counts were completed on returned surveys to compile a list of those writing activities most commonly identified as critical for reading teachers.

At the same time, undergraduate students who had completed at least one course in reading education were surveyed concerning the nature of writing activities they had been engaged in as a part of their preparation to become future teachers of reading. They were also asked to generally decribe the writing experiences they had had as a part of their teacher education program. Frequency counts were completed to determine the types of writing activities being used with these students. A comparison of writing activities of the inservice and preservice teachers was completed by noting the likenesses and differences between these two rank-ordered lists.

RESULTS: Survey results from inservice teachers indicated that the ten most frequently used forms of writing used to fulfill their responsibilities as reading teachers were the following: unit/lesson plans, instructional writing (used in conducting lessons), agenda/schedules, brainstorming ("jotting down a list of ideas"), curriculum development, informal personal letters/notes, progress reports, short responses/reactions/comments, letters of appreciation /congratulations/etc., and field notes/anecdotal records.

Survey results from preservice teachers indicated that the ten most frequently experienced writing activities students had been engaged in as a part of their reading coursework included the following: unit/lesson plans, brainstorming, short responses, curriculum development, informative report/essay, reviews, instructional writing, observation reports, journals, freewriting, and progress reports.

There was common ground between the writing activities of preservice and inservice reading teachers. Six activities were identified as frequent activities in both groups. Preservice teachers were engaged in some activities which may be more prevalent in university courses, such as reviews, journals, and informative reports. The forms of letter writing identified by inservice teachers were ranked among the least mentioned activities by preservice teachers.

UNEXPECTED DETOUR: As often happens with ongoing research, I became less interested in the question I originally posed which was what are the similarities and differences between the writing activities of inservice and preservice teachers. I started to realize that the critical issue was not just identifying what kinds of writing do

reading teachers do. Responses to the open-ended prompt on the original questionnaire surfaced a more important issue -- how did these reading teachers see themselves as writers? I began to hear other authorities express concern that many teachers were being asked to create communities of readers and writers in their classrooms when many of those same teachers had not been participants in similar communities themselves. I began to rethink my responsibility as a teacher educator. I was less concerned with providing my students with a matching set of the writing activities reading teachers typically did. I became more concerned with assisting students - both undergraduate and graduate -- to see themselves as insiders in a community of writers.

Fostering Writers in Reading Education Courses

1) Modeling: Many of us are insiders in the writing community. We need to do what we are encouraging our students to do -- let others know that we are writers and that we value writing in our lives. We need to regularly share our writing with our students. These might be completed works or works in progress. We might even consider using students as outside reviewers. We need to share the insider information we have as a participants in the writing community. Besides sharing our writing, students need to see us write. We need to engage in writing when our students are writing.

2) Encouragement: Many times in satisfying course requirements, students produce products that with minimal revision are worthy of publication. We may be able to assist their development as writers simply by letting them know about appropriate outlets and procedures for submitting such manuscripts. State journals are an untapped potential forum for the work of many students. Literacy vignettes and classroom ideas may even find a receptive audience in journals like THE READING TEACHER.

3) Simulations: Traditional kinds of writing activities can be recast to provide students with some opportunities to attempt a variety of writing activities which might more closely resemble some of the "real world" writing which reading teachers often are asked to do. For example, students might be encouraged to present typical responses to essay questions in the formats of one-page memos or a personal letters. Class activities can also include first hand experiences with writing activities ranging from cross-age penpal exchanges to traveling journals -- activities that our students can also use with their students in school settings.

4) Implementation: We may want to set aside time to provide students with at least a limited first-hand experience with the writing process. As students learn about how to teach writing and to create writing communities in their own classrooms, we might also take them through the writing process. This will allow them to experience the same aspects of the writing process from idea generation to large group sharing that they will be providing for their students.

5) Literacy Portfolios: The implementation of a literacy portfolio self-evaluation component to selective reading education courses provides an invitation for students to work on who they are as writers. By encouraging students to self-assess, they will be able to identify some short-term goals on which they can focus to improve who they are as writers. By providing time for working on goals and feedback on students' progress toward those goals, instructors can assist students as they make these changes. Portfolios, however, still leave the primary responsibility for directing and documenting the change in the hands of the students.

Please indicate the forms of writing that you do to fulfill your responsibilities as a reading educator. REMEMBER TO FOCUS ON THOSE FORMS OF WRITING THAT HAVE SOME RELATIONSHIP TO YOUR ROLE AS A READING EDUCATOR:

1. Personal journal, diary, log
___ Regularly ___ Frequently ___ Sometimes ___ Seldom ___ Never

2. Informal Personal Letters / Notes
___ Regularly ___ Frequently ___ Sometimes ___ Seldom ___ Never

3. Freewriting (spontaneous writing for self)
___ Regularly ___ Frequently ___ Sometimes ___ Seldom ___ Never

4. Brainstorming (jotting down a list of ideas for self)
___ Regularly ___ Frequently ___ Sometimes ___ Seldom ___ Never

5. Short Responses / Reactions / Comments
___ Regularly ___ Frequently ___ Sometimes ___ Seldom ___ Never

6. Field Notes / Anecdotal Records
___ Regularly ___ Frequently ___ Sometimes ___ Seldom ___ Never

7. Letters of appreciation, congratulations, etc.
___ Regularly ___ Frequently ___ Sometimes ___ Seldom ___ Never

8. Business Communication (formal letters, memos, forms, etc.)
___ Regularly ___ Frequently ___ Sometimes ___ Seldom ___ Never

9. Contracts / Grants
___ Regularly ___ Frequently ___ Sometimes ___ Seldom ___ Never

10. Legislation / Resolutions
___ Regularly ___ Frequently ___ Sometimes ___ Seldom ___ Never

11. Invitations
___ Regularly ___ Frequently ___ Sometimes ___ Seldom ___ Never

12. Resume / Bio / Vita
___ Regularly ___ Frequently ___ Sometimes ___ Seldom ___ Never

13. Curriculum Development (Goals, Objectives, Guides, etc.).
___ Regularly ___ Frequently ___ Sometimes ___ Seldom ___ Never

14. Unit Plans / Lesson Plans
___ Regularly ___ Frequently ___ Sometimes ___ Seldom ___ Never

15. Instructional Writing (Writing used in conducting lessons)
___ Regularly ___ Frequently ___ Sometimes ___ Seldom ___ Never

16. Songs / Poems / Rhymes / Fingerplays
___ Regularly ___ Frequently ___ Sometimes ___ Seldom ___ Never

17. Plays / Dramas / Skits
___ Regularly ___ Frequently ___ Sometimes ___ Seldom ___ Never

18. Jokes / Riddles / Cartoons
___ Regularly ___ Frequently ___ Sometimes ___ Seldom ___ Never

19. Stories / Tales / Fables / Myths
___ Regularly ___ Frequently ___ Sometimes ___ Seldom ___ Never

20. Informative Report / Essay
___ Regularly ___ Frequently ___ Sometimes ___ Seldom ___ Never

21. Reviews of Books / Articles / Materials
___ Regularly ___ Frequently ___ Sometimes ___ Seldom ___ Never

22. Formal Informative Letter
___ Regularly ___ Frequently ___ Sometimes ___ Seldom ___ Never

23. Research Paper (Purpose == to inform through objective description or analysis)
___ Regularly ___ Frequently ___ Sometimes ___ Seldom ___ Never

24. Research Paper (purpose == to influence and change opinions and actions of others)
___ Regularly ___ Frequently ___ Sometimes ___ Seldom ___ Never

25. Examinations / Tests / Quizzes / Assessment tools
___ Regularly ___ Frequently ___ Sometimes ___ Seldom ___ Never

26. Progress Reports
___ Regularly ___ Frequently ___ Sometimes ___ Seldom ___ Never

27. Agenda / Schedule
___ Regularly ___ Frequently ___ Sometimes ___ Seldom ___ Never

28. Informative Newspaper / Newletter / Article
___ Regularly ___ Frequently ___ Sometimes ___ Seldom ___ Never

29. Profile / Portrait / Case Study
___ Regularly ___ Frequently ___ Sometimes ___ Seldom ___ Never

30. Observation Report
___ Regularly ___ Frequently ___ Sometimes ___ Seldom ___ Never

31. AV / Oral presentation (outline, notes, script, etc.)
___ Regularly ___ Frequently ___ Sometimes ___ Seldom ___ Never

32. Persuasive Report / Essay
___ Regularly ___ Frequently ___ Sometimes ___ Seldom ___ Never

33. Editorial
___ Regularly ___ Frequently ___ Sometimes ___ Seldom ___ Never

34. Persuasive Letter
___ Regularly ___ Frequently ___ Sometimes ___ Seldom ___ Never

35. Posters / Buttons / Bumper Stickers
___ Regularly ___ Frequently ___ Sometimes ___ Seldom ___ Never

36. Flyers / Advertisements
___ Regularly ___ Frequently ___ Sometimes ___ Seldom ___ Never

37. Other _____
___ Regularly ___ Frequently ___ Sometimes ___ Seldom ___ Never

38. Other _____
___ Regularly ___ Frequently ___ Sometimes ___ Seldom ___ Never